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INFO RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI IMMEDIATE 5255  
RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY RIGA IMMEDIATE 2957  
RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS IMMEDIATE 6700  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 1228  
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FOR EUR/NB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2018  
TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [EN](#)  
SUBJECT: FMF FUNDING FOR ESTONIA

REF: A. 06 TALLINN 768  
[B](#). 07 TALLINN 693  
[C](#). 07 TALLINN 802

Classified By: Classified By: CDA Karen Decker for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Post understands the Department may cut the FY08 Foreign Military Financing (FMF) allocation for Estonia by as much as 90 percent. While we understand that FMF funding must be prioritized for developing countries and not for full NATO members, a cut of this magnitude in a single year will have political -- not just operational -- consequences here. It is our assessment that such a drastic change in our assistance posture will negatively impact both Estonia's operational capacity and its political will to continue participating in critical international military operations.

[1](#)2. (C) Nearly eight percent of Estonia's Armed Forces are deployed abroad without caveats in operations that we asked them to support, including Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and NATO operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo. In addition, Estonian ships frequently support NATO naval operations. The Estonian Defense Forces have effectively used FMF both to enhance current operational capabilities and to help transform EDF from a post-Soviet military to one which meets international standards and Estonia's NATO commitments (Ref A). Recent FMF financing has been used to purchase critical hardware upgrades. For example, Estonian troops supporting U.S. Forces in Camp Taji outside Baghdad use night visions goggles EDF purchased with FMF funds in [1](#)2006. Additionally, FMF-financed communications equipment is used by Estonian units deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, either directly in theater or while training for deployment. Looking ahead, the Ministry of Defense plans to use FMF funds over the next three years to support its efforts to modernize Estonia's only operational airbase (Amari), which would put it in a better position to support NATO operations, including air policing.

[1](#)3. (C) Such a large cut, coming without warning, and as a fait accompli without the chance of at least a discussion between trusted Allies, will be interpreted by Estonians as a sign that the United States does not value Estonia's contributions to international operations. This damage to our bilateral relationship will impede our ability to influence GOE decisions on procurement and force modernization. It will also affect future GOE decisions about foreign operations, particularly Iraq. While the Prime Minister's support for Iraq is steadfast, there are

cracks in his coalition on this issue and significant popular opposition. Parliament's December vote to extend Estonia's mandate in Iraq passed by only 2 votes. Several MPs from the government coalition voted against and others abstained (Ref C). In October, for the first time, Defense Minister Aaviksoo expressed doubt that Estonia will stay in Iraq beyond 2008 (Ref B). Policy-makers uncertainty about U.S. support for Estonia could become the decisive factor when the GOE considers whether to remain in Iraq in 2009.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: A decision to all-but-eliminate military assistance to Estonia will not paralyze the MOD or immediately prevent Estonia from participating in international operations. We understand that global, urgent priorities force us to make difficult choices. It remains in the U.S. national interest, however, to have international support -- in the form of foreign troops -- supporting us around the world. It seems we can best keep these nations onside by giving a little something back to them for the sacrifices they make -- in the form of respect for their service and assistance that continues to motivate them to strive to meet our standards. Cutting off the flow all at once does neither. END COMMENT.  
DECKER